University of Wollongong
Research Online

Faculty of Arts - Papers (Archive)

Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts

2001

Global Spin

Sharon Beder
University of Wollongong, sharonb@uow.edu.au

Publication Details

Beder, S, Global Spin, in Starkey, R and Welford, R (eds), Earthscan Reader in Business and Sustainable Development, Earthscan, London, 2001, 242-266.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Global Spin

Sharon Beder

This chapter examines the way that corporations have used their financial resources and power to counter the gains made by environmentalists, to reshape public opinion and to persuade politicians against increased environmental regulation. Corporate activism, ignited in the 1970s and rejuventated in the 1990s, has enabled a corporate agenda to dominate most debates about the state of the environment and what should be done about it. This situation poses grave dangers to the ability of democratic societies to respond to environmental threats.

Between 1965 and 1970 environmental groups proliferated and environmental protection, especially pollution control, rose dramatically as a public priority in many countries. *Time* magazine labelled it a "national obsession" in America. A "sense of urgency—even crisis—suddenly pervaded public discussion of environmental issues. The press was filled with stories of environmental trauma..."[i]

As environmental concern grew, so did distrust of business institutions, which were seen to be the cause of environmental problems such as air and water pollution. Public respect for business fell to an all time low and "for the first time since the Great Depression, the legitimacy of big business was being called into question by large sectors of the public."[ii] Surveys showed increasing percentages of people nominated "factories and plants" as the major source of air pollution, for example. The distrust of business and support for environmentalism was highest amongst the young and the college or university educated.[iii]

Governments worldwide responded with new forms of comprehensive environmental legislation such as Clean Air Acts and Clean Water Acts and the establishment of environmental regulatory agencies. These new environmental laws were part of a general trend in legislation aimed at regulating corporate activities and constraining unwanted business activities. In the US, for example:

> from 1969 through 1972, virtually the entire American business community experienced a series of political setbacks without parallel in the post-war period. In the space of only four years, Congress enacted a significant tax-reform bill, four major environmental laws, an occupational safety and health act, and a series of additional consumer-protection statutes. The government also created a number of important new regulatory agencies, including the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), investing them with broad powers over a wide range of business decisions.[iv]

Businesses found that their past ways of dealing with government no longer sufficed. The scope of political conflict widened. "For the first time since the 1930s, business found its political influence seriously challenged by a new set of interest groups."[v] Grefe and Linsky describe the traditional business approach in their book *The New Corporate Activism*:

> Back then, it was standard for organizations to conduct their government relations in accordance with a "fix-it" mentality. They had a problem. They hired a lobbyist. They said, "Fix-it!" What they meant was "Kill it or make it go away."... It was 'influence peddling,' quite simply—that is, finding the person who knew the legislator or regulator and getting him (it was always a 'him' in those days of the old-boy network) to bury the problem.[vi]

THE FIRST WAVE OF CORPORATE ACTIVISM IN THE US

In various business meetings corporate executives lamented their decline in influence: "The truth is that we've been clobbered" the chief executive officer of General Motors told chiefs from other corporations. The chairman of the board of General Foods asked "How come we can't get together and make our voices heard?"[vii], which is of course what they did. Throughout the 1970s US corporations became politically active, getting together to support a conservative anti-regulatory agenda and financing a vast public relations effort aimed at regaining public trust in corporate responsibility and freedom from government regulation.

According to David Vogel, in his book *Fluctuating Fortunes: The Political Power of Business in America*, "it took business about seven years to rediscover how to win in Washington." Once they realised how the political scene had changed corporations began to adopt the strategies that public-interest activists had used so effectively against them—grassroots organising and coalition building, telephone and letter-writing campaigns, using the media, research reports and testifying at hearings, "to maximize political influence."[viii] To these strategies corporations added huge financial resources and professional advice. "A new breed of public affairs professionals began emerging" who could service corporations in their new activism.[ix]

> For business, the turbulence of change was a nightmare of new regulations and increasingly vocal interest groups that needed pandering to. The rules of the game had changed, and new ways had to be found to at once get what one needed from government, shout down the opposition, and harness the power of interest groups for one's own benefit through persuasion.[x]

They established 'public affairs' departments, increased the funding and staffing of those departments, and allocated responsibility for public affairs to a senior company executive, such as a Vice-President. The offices of these public affairs units were increasingly sited in Washington. Chief Executive Officers also devoted increasing amounts of their time to government relations. A survey of four hundred public affairs units in large and medium-sized firms in 1981 found that most received more than half a million dollars each year in funding and more than half were set up after 1970.[xi]

The number of business lobbyists in Washington increased rapidly through the 1970s. By 1982 2,445 firms "had some form of political representation in Washington" compared with 175 in 1971. Trade associations also moved to Washington. Often they were restructured and given increased budgets.[xii]

> All told, as of 1980 there were in Washington 12,000 lawyers representing business before federal regulatory agencies and the federal courts, 9,000 business lobbyists, 50,000 trade-association personnel, 8,000 public

> relations specialists, 1,300 public-affairs consultants, and 12,000 specialized journalists reporting to particular industries on government developments affecting them. The number of individuals employed by the 'private sector industry' exceeded the number of federal employers in the Washington metropolitan area for the first time since before the New Deal.[xiii]

In response to government regulations, brought on by the activities of environmentalists and public interest groups, businesses began to cooperate in a way that was unprecedented, building coalitions and alliances and putting aside competitive rivalries. This was facilitated by the introduction of legislation such as Clean Air Acts that affected large numbers of industries rather than one industry at a time. "They learned to find people who were similarly situated and form ad hoc committees with these people and have a concerted, organized effort across the board of a number of industries who were similarly situated to fight the thing together."[xiv]

Broad coalitions of business people sought to affect "a reorientation of American politics." The Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers were resurrected and rejuvenated and new organisations such as the Business Roundtable (for large corporations) and the Small Business Legislative Council (for small businesses) were formed to lobby government. The Business Roundtable, established in 1972, consisted of the chief executive officers of almost 200 corporations. It "cranked out smooth public-relations messages" warning of the costs of environmentalism. One of the Roundtable's early successes was its opposition to the Consumer Protection Agency in which it used strategically designed polling techniques and employed a public relations firm to distribute editorials and cartoons to thousands of papers and magazines.[xv]

This trend towards corporate activism could be observed in other countries too. In Australia corporations "substantially increased their level of resources and commitment to monitoring and influencing the political environment"; ensured their senior executives were effective political operatives in their dealings with politicians and bureaucrats; hired consulting firms to help with government submissions; and established government relations units within their companies with direct access to the chief executive officer. Also, as in the US, "concerted efforts were made to improve and centralise business representation at the national level" so as to mobilise and increase their power.[xvi]

The Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI) was established in 1970 and the National Farmers Federation in 1977. The Australian Business Roundtable, modelled on the US Business Roundtable and made up of chief executives of 20 of Australia's largest companies, was founded in 1980. The Business Council of Australia was formed in 1983 by the chief executives of 66 large corporations, following what they perceived as a weak showing by business at the Economic Summit organised by the newly elected Labor Government. The Business Council now represents big business in Australia.[xvii]

Rejuvenation of the activism of business in the US happened at a time that political power in the Congress was becoming more decentralised and fragmented and party loyalty was weakening. Individual politicians were increasingly susceptible to pressure from interest groups. Whereas previously business leaders could lobby key

people in Congress, now they had to adopt a new lobbying strategy that focused on a wide number of individual Congress people. This required organising support in a number of electoriates so that "by 1978, corporations and trade associations were spending between $850 million and $900 million a year on mobilizing their supporters throughout the United States."[xviii] Trade associations did this by organising the owners of large numbers of small businesses to lobby their Congress person while large corporations mobilised shareholders, suppliers, customers and employees.

THE WAR OF IDEAS

Far more important than the money invested in political campaigns, however, was the money invested in other forms of political influence, particularly into influencing the political agenda through the dissemination and selling of ideas:

> Right-wing business men like Richard Mellon Scaife and Joseph Coors, and conservative treasuries like the Mobil and Olin foundations, poured money into ad campaigns, lawsuits, elections, and books and articles protesting 'Big Government' and 'strangulation by regulation', blaming environmentalists for all the nation's ills from the energy crisis to the sexual revolution.[xix]

Corporations put large amounts of money into advertising and sponsorships aimed at improving the corporate image and putting forward corporate views. Much of this advertising was on environmental issues. One 1974 survey of 114 large companies "found that 30 to 35 percent of corporate advertising addressed environmentalism, energy-related issues, or the capitalist system." Over $100 million dollars was being spent each year on this sort of advocacy advertising during the mid-1970s particularly by oil companies, electrical utility companies and the chemical industry.[xx]

The Advertising Council became active. Using funds from the US Department of Commerce, it attempted to educate the public about the benefits of free enterprise, distributing millions of booklets to schools, workplaces and communities. It blamed inflation on government regulation. The idea for this campaign came from the chairman of the board of Procter and Gamble, the largest advertiser in the US, in a speech in which he called for American people to be better educated about the free enterprise system, so that business people need not be defensive about their work.[xxi]

In Australia, after the election of a 'progressive' Labor government in 1972 the Australian Chamber of Commerce reacted with a nationwide 'economic education campaign' to promote free enterprise and in 1975 Enterprise Australia was established by the Free Enterprise Association (funded by multinational companies such as Esso, Kodak, IBM and Ford Motors) to take part in the "propaganda warfare for capitalism". In 1977 the president of the Institute of Directors in Australia told his fellow directors that the Institute should, in conjunction with Enterprise Australia, "publicise and sell the benefits of the system it espouses."[xxii]

Another area of corporate investment in the US, Britain and Australia was to support scholars whose views were compatible with the corporate view through funding them in universities or in non-university research institutes otherwise known as think tanks. This was seen as a way of countering some of the anti-business research that

was being produced in universities, particularly in the social-sciences. Irving Kristol, one of those widely credited with persuading the US business community of the merits of this strategy argued "You can only beat an idea with another idea, and the war of ideas and ideologies will be won or lost within the 'new class', not against it."[xxiii] The 'new class' were those who dealt in ideas rather than products such as government bureaucrats, academics and journalists.

Another person who persuasively made these arguments was William Simon, head of the Olin Foundation. He argued that rather than fight each piece of legislation as it came up or spend money getting particular candidates elected, business people should foster a 'counterintelligentsia' "in the foundations, universities, and the media that would regain ideological dominance for business." Three of the wealthiest US foundations funded the establishment of the Institute for Educational Affairs (IEA) which was conceived by Kristol and Simon, to coordinate the flow of money from corporations into the production of conservative ideas. Millions of corporate dollars was distributed each year in this way.[xxiv]

Corporations continued to fund the sciences and engineering but became much more political in other university funding, endowing forty chairs of "free enterprise" between 1974 and 1978, to promote business values to undergraduate students at colleges perceived to be liberal. They also spent millions "to influence the teaching of business and economics in the nation's high schools." They sponsored or funded educational films such as a Milton Friedman series *Free to Choose,* promoting free market economics and screened on public television, and five films on *American Enterprise* supported by Phillips Petroleum Company. The Business Roundtable also sponsored economics courses in primary and secondary schools.[xxv]

In Australia, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Australia used surveys of school leavers to find the 'deficiencies' in their attitudes to the free enterprise system and then circulated corrective material through schools. They also produced fifteen videos and films with titles such as *Profits*, *Advertising* and *The Market Economy*. Their material was made available to school resource centres with the approval of the departments of education in each state.[xxvi]

Enterprise Australia produced a series of television programmes *Making it Together*, distributed a text book by one of its directors entitled *The World of Business*, presented awards to Young Achievers and broadcast commercials promoting the benefits of free enterprise on over one hundred radio stations. Additionally business groups such as chambers of commerce, the Australian Bankers Association and the Australian Mining Industry Council ran conferences and made presentations to teachers, business people and school students.[xxvii]

Part of the aim of all this 'education' was to get people used to the idea that "it is an appropriate part of business's role in democracy to judge what beliefs we must hold in order to be 'economically educated'." They juxtaposed personal, political and economic freedom, arguing that constraints on economic freedom were tantamount to reducing personal and political freedom and that those who sought to "intervene excessively in the play of market forces," however well intentioned they might be, posed a major threat to those freedoms. Criticism of the economic system amounted to subversion of the political system.[xxviii]

Think tanks also took a leading part in the war of ideas in various countries. In the US in particular, conservative foundations and large corporations established and/or funded a new set of think tanks which were ideologically compatible with right wing causes and corporate interests, promoting the free market and attacking government regulation.

> Funded by eccentric billionaires, conservative foundations, and politically motivated multinational corporations, right-wing policy entrepreneurs founded think tanks, university centers, and political journals, and developed the social and political networks necessary to tie this nascent empire together. The end product was a tidal wave of money, ideas, and self-promotion that carried the Reaganites to power.[xxix]

This influx of money meant not only that conservative think tanks proliferated but that other think tanks moved towards the right. As Jerome Himmelstein points out in his book *To the Right*: "The political mobilization of big business in the mid 1970s gave conservatives greater access to money and channels of political influence. These helped turn conservative personnel into political leaders and advisers, and conservative ideas, especially economic ones, into public policy."[xxx]

In the mid-1970s the corporate-owned media announced a conservative mood had set in. Although there was indeed a 'backlash' from conservative groups the media exaggerated what was happening by portraying it as a widespread change in public mood. This in turn helped shape public opinion into a conservative mould. Micheal Parenti in his book on the politics of the mass media says:

> In discovering a 'conservative mood', the news media had to overlook a great deal about the 1970s and 1980s including the various polls conducted during that period—which showed a shift in a *progressive* direction (even among many who labelled themselves conservative) on issues such as military spending, environmental protection, care for the elderly, tax reform, and race relations....By crediting conservative policies with a popular support they did not have, the press did its part in shifting the political agenda in a rightward direction.[xxxi]

Robert Entman, in his book *Democracy Without Citizens* agrees that the public's policy preferences had not changed much but "the media-fed perception that they had swung right influenced politics," legitimising the conservatism of Reagan's administration, and allowing him to implement a policy agenda that lacked majority support.[xxxii] During the late 1970s and early 1980s protest activities by environmental and other public interest groups went largely unreported or dismissively reported as a hangover from the past.

Vogel argues that by 1978 US business had "clearly regained the political initiative" and defeated many of the regulatory measures hard won by public interest activists. They achieved the abolition of the consumer protection agency, reduction of automobile-emissions standards, the deregulation of energy prices and the lowering of corporate taxes.[xxxiii] In the late 1970s US business was spending a billion dollars each year on propaganda of various sorts "aimed at persuading the American public that their interests were the same as business's interests." The result of all this

expenditure showed in the polls when the percentage of people who thought that there was too much regulation soared to 60% in 1980 (up from 22 per cent in 1975).[xxxiv]

Ronald Reagan, who was elected President in 1980, owed his success partly to conservative corporate interests, which he served faithfully once in power through a combination of deregulation and political appointments and by directing funding away from agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). During the 1980s, under Reagan's administration, the numbers of trade and professional associations, corporations and interest groups with offices in Washington continued to grow. By 1985, an estimated 80,000 employees of these associations were being serviced by accountants, lobbyists, lawyers, trade paper journalists, public relations advisers, direct mail consultants, economists and think tanks.[xxxv] It was a huge information industry and all this information was shaped and presented to promote the interests of the associations and corporations generating it.

THE NEW CORPORATE ACTIVISM

Corporations managed to achieve a virtual moratorium on new environmental legislation in many countries throughout the late 1970s and most of the 1980s. However, towards the end of the 1980s public concern about the environment rose again, reinforced by scientific discoveries regarding phenomena such as ozone depletion and weather patterns that seemed to indicate that global warming had already begun. Local pollution events, such as medical waste washing up on New York beaches and sewage pollution on Sydney beaches, also contributed to the public peception of an environment in decline.

A 1989 *New York Times*/CBS poll found that 80% of people surveyed agreed that "protecting the environment is so important that standards cannot be too high and continuing environmental improvements must be made regardless of cost." Greens parties in Europe attracted 15% of the vote. Sixteen percent of Canadians surveyed said the environment was the most important problem in Canada—more important even than unemployment—and most people felt that solving environmental problems required government action. An Australian survey found that 59% of people believed that protecting the environment was more important than other issues including the economy and 81% said they were prepared to pay for environmental protection.[xxxvi]

A Saulwick Poll in 1990 also found that 67 per cent of people thought Australia should "concentrate on protecting the environment even if it means some reduction in economic growth."[xxxvii] Similarly a 1991 Gallup poll also found that 75% said environmental protection should be given priority, "even at the risk of curbing economic growth." In this poll 80% of those surveyed called themselves environmentalists.[xxxviii]

Amidst all this public concern, regulatory agencies in various countries got tougher and new laws were enacted. In the US, the highest ever number of environmental convictions were recorded by the EPA in 1989 and half of those convicted got jail sentences. Environmental indictments by the Justice Department increased by 30% in 1990 over the previous year.[xxxix] In NSW Australia, an Environmental Offences and

Penalties Act was introduced in 1989 which provided for jail terms and million dollar fines for senior executives of polluting companies.

This heightening of public anxiety in response to scientific confirmation of environmental deterioration induced a new wave of corporate political activity. This time the corporate backlash was able to utilise the techniques and organisations that had been established in the 1970s for the same purpose. With their activist machinery already in place corporations were able to take advantage of the new PR techniques and information technologies available for raising money, building coalitions, manipulating public opinion and lobbying politicians. And this time, rather than focusing on defending the free enterprise system and opposing labour unions, the attack was far more targeted at environmentalists.

For example, in 1991 Bob Williams, consultant to the oil and gas industry, wrote in his book *US Petroleum Strategies in the Decade of the Environment* that the industry needed "To put the environmental lobby out of business... There is no greater imperative... If the petroleum industry is to survive, it must render the environmental lobby superfluous, an anachronism."[xl] Similarly Ron Arnold, another industry consultant, told a meeting of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, "You must turn the public against environmentalists or you will lose your environmental battle as surely as the US timber industry has lost theirs."[xli]

Frank Mankiewicz, a senior executive at transnational PR firm Hill and Knowlton, observed:

> The big corporations, our clients, are scared shitless of the environmental movement... They sense that there's a majority out there and that the emotions are all on the other side—if they can be heard. They think the politicians are going to yield up to the emotions. I think the corporations are wrong about that. I think the companies will have to give in only at insignificant levels. Because the companies are too strong, they're the establishment. The environmentalists are going to have to be like the mob in the square in Romania before they prevail.[xlii]

Having observed the rise in environmental consciousness and the defensiveness of US industry, C.J. Silas, the Chief Executive Officer for Phillips Petroleum Company, wrote in *Public Affairs Journal* at the beginning of 1990: "There's no reason we can't make the environmental issue *our* issue. If we wait to be told what to do—if we offer no initiatives of our own and react defensively—we're playing not to lose, and that's not good enough".[xliii]

During the 1990s the application of public relations to environmental concerns really came into its own. Environmentalism was labelled "the life and death PR battle of the 1990s" and "the issue of the decade" by public relations personnel. Activist Brian Tokar suggests the rise in environmental PR was because, with the collapse of communism in many parts of the world, "the growth of ecological awareness in the industrialized countries may be one of the last internal obstacles to the complete hegemony of transnational corporate capitalism."[xliv]

The coalition building which began in the 1970s continues to grow. A survey of 30 of the largest firms in the US found that each firm was involved in an average of 5.7 coalitions, such as The Business Roundtable; most of them "formed for legislative and regulatory purposes and focused primarily on national issues" such as the environment. More than a third of the corporations surveyed spend over a million dollars each year on "coalition activity".[xlv]

Some corporations have gone beyond their corporate allies in their organising efforts, hiring specialised public relations firms to set up front groups that promote the corporate agenda but pose as public interest groups. Public relations firms also have become adept at creating the impression of grass roots support for corporate causes so as to convince politicians to oppose environmental reforms. A 1992 survey by the US Public Affairs Council found that 73% of the 163 large companies surveyed had a senior executive responsible for grassroots organising, a newly acquired responsibility growing at a rate second only to environmental affairs.[xlvi] There are now also several firms in the US which specialise in creating grass roots support for industry causes.

Industry interests have been able to turn the disaffection of rural and resource industry workers, farmers and small business people into anti-environmental sentiment. Nowhere has this been more spectacularly achieved as in the US with its Wise Use Movement. The Wise Use Movement has attained grass roots support through enrolling thousands of people in the US who are worried about their future and feel individually powerless to do anything about it. A similar coalition in Canada has been formed called the Share movement and elements of this type of movement are spreading to Australia.

Those who oppose undesirable developments and unfettered resource extraction are now finding that they are not only subject to the abuse of industry funded anti-environmental groups but they are also vulnerable to a new wave of law suits filed against them for exercising their democratic rights to circulate petitions, write to public officials, attend public meetings, organise boycotts and engage in peaceful demonstrations. Every year thousands of environmentalists and ordinary citizens are sued for speaking out against governments and corporations.

Corporate political donations have also increased. Organisations involved in influencing environmental legislation in the US since 1989 have included the American Farm Bureau Federation which has contributed almost a million dollars to congressional candidates between 1989 and 1994 in its efforts to get the Clean Water Act controls on factory farms removed. The Republicans have introduced a bill that does just that. Oil corporation and land developer, Chevron Corporation, which is a member of the Alliance for Reasonable Regulation has spend over a million dollars on congressional candidates during the same period and managed to introduce the concept of "plausible risk" into the same bill so that acceptable toxicity levels would be loosened. According to the EPA's Toxics Release Inventory, Chevron releases millions of pounds of toxic material into the environment each year.[xlvii]

Exxon with a similar annual discharge of toxic material has also been a member of the Alliance for Reasonable Regulations and spent over a million dollars in that same period on congressional candidates in its efforts to prevent the Clean Air Act being strengthened. Dow Chemical and its affiliates have also given over a million dollars

and opposed the strengthening of the Clean Air Act as well as pushing for cost-benefit analysis to be incorporated into the Clean Water Act. Chevron, Exxon and Dow Chemical all give financial support to a range of front groups, as Chevron does, including Alliance to Keep Americans Working, American Council on Science and Health and the National Wetlands Coalition.[xlviii]

In Europe, lobbyists and corporate consultants are flocking to Brussels to influence policy making by the European Parliament:

> Leading the most recent wave of arrivals are large U.S. law firms with strong Washington, D.C., lobbying experience. They join an international armada of advocates already active in Brussels, including.... public relations groups, confederations of European trade associations, representatives of U.S. states, German lander and British municipalities, small 'boutique' consultancies, in-house representatives of individual U.S., European, and Japanese companies, European trade unions, agricultural groups, and a growing number of public-interest associations.[xlix]

Conservative think tanks, having been instrumental in bringing Ronald Reagan to power in the US and Margaret Thatcher to power in the UK, have turned their attention to environmental issues and the defeat of environmental regulations. They have sought to cast doubt on the very features of the environmental crisis that had heightened public concerns at the end of the 1980s including ozone depletion, greenhouse warming and industrial pollution.

Think tanks have opposed environmental legislation in a variety of ways. In the US they have attempted to hamstring the regulatory process by advocating legislation that would ensure regulatory efforts become too expensive and difficult to implement, through insisting on cost benefit analyses and risk assessments of proposed legislation and compensation to state governments and property owners for the costs of complying with the legislation. Worldwide these think tanks have promoted free market techniques, such as tradeable property and pollution rights, pricing mechanisms, tax incentives, and voluntary agreements, for dealing with environmental degradation. These have been taken seriously by governments and in some cases accepted by environmentalists as a valid alternative to tougher legislation.

Corporations have also turned their attention to the next generation through the development and distribution of 'educational' material to schools. The potential to shape environmental perceptions and improve corporate images at the same time has attracted many customers to the firms designing educational materials for corporations. These materials inevitably give a corporate view of environmental problems and avoid solutions that would involve reduced consumption, increased regulation or reduced corporate profits.

The combination of activist techniques and corporate money is a powerful weapon in the battle of ideas. In the US opinion polling indicates corporate funded anti-environmental efforts produced a major shift in public opinion within the space of a single year. In 1992 51 per cent of those surveyed agreed that environmentalists had "gone too far" compared with 17 per cent the year before.[l]

Andrew Rowell, in his book *Green Backlash*, dates the arrival of the anti-environmentalist backlash in Britain as spring 1995, when the media took up the 'anti-green tune' and a number of books were published that attacked environmentalism. These included a book by Richard North whose research, according to Rowell, was funded by British chemical company ICI and another published by the Conservative UK think-tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs.[li]

The corporate muscle of multinational, or transnational, corporations is formidable. In 1995 the UN Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD, reported that these corporations—40,000 of them—controlled two thirds of the world's trade in goods and services.[lii] According to *New Internationalist* magazine in 1993:

> The combined sales of the world's largest 350 multinationals total nearly one third of the combined gross national products of all industrialised countries and exceed the individual gross national products of all Third World countries.[liii]

Many of the largest multinational corporations are headquartered in the US and it is not surprising that the strategies they have been pioneered there to combat environmental regulations are being used in other countries. This book then examines this second wave of corporate activism that has emerged in the US, Canada, UK and Australia and elsewhere.

DECLINING DEMOCRACY

Surveys show that the majority of people in most countries are not only concerned about the environment, they think environmental protection should be given priority over economic growth and they believe governments should regulate to protect it.[liv] Yet this public concern is not translating into government action because of the activities of large corporations that are seeking to subvert or manipulate the popular will.

A recent *ABC News*/*Washington Post* survey, for instance, found that nearly three quarters of people in the US didn't think government was doing enough to protect the environment[lv] and an *NBC News*/*Wall Street Journal* survey found that a majority of respondents wanted environmental regulations strengthened (compared to less than one in five people who thought they should be weakened).[lvi] Similarly a *Time*/CNN poll found that a majority of people wanted environmental expenditure by government increased with only 16% wanting it reduced.[lvii] A Harris survey found that most people would be willing to pay more taxes and higher prices if the money was spent "to protect and restore endangered species". And a Gallup poll in 1995 found that two-thirds of people agreed that "Protection of the environment should be given a priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth," a result mirrored in a 1994 *Times Mirror* Magazines survey.[lviii]

Despite such public opinion, the Republican-dominated Congress has actually been dismantling and weakening existing environmental regulations. The consequences for the environment are devastating. *The Economist* recently reported an OECD study that found the environment was declining in the US:

> Wetlands, good for wildlife, are being mopped up by developers; extinctions are increasing... Municipal waste accumulates: each American now jettisons 2kg of rubbish a day, more than any other people on earth. Nuclear waste and used nuclear fuel pile up in temporary stores. The number of vehicles on the roads has doubled since 1970, and drivers cover twice as many miles... Some 15% of rivers and 10% of lakes are still too grubby for people to swim or fish in. Some 59m people still live in areas where the air is dirtier than the government thinks safe. And the United States remains the world's largest producer of carbon dioxide, which may be causing global warming.[lix]

Yet the corporate-generated Congressional attack on environmental protections goes on relentlessly. Industry groups have used their lobbyists, their contributions and their coalitions and front groups to achieve this result.

> Lobbyists for the coalitions have provided staff to Republican lawmakers, drafted parts of bills, and sat on the dais with congressmembers during committee meetings; they even set up an office adjacent to the House floor to write amendments during the floor debate last March... 267 political action committees (dubbed the Dirty Water PACs because of their anti-environmental agenda) contributed $57 million to political candidates between 1989 and 1994.[lx]

The pattern of public concern and government inaction is repeated in other countries. For example, whilst Australians are amongst the world's most environmentally concerned people, their government's environmental record is one of the lowest for OECD countries. A 1994 *Sydney Morning Herald* Saulwick poll found that 57 per cent of people surveyed thought environmental protection should have a higher priority than economic growth[lxi] while a NSW EPA survey, which also found high levels of environmental concern, discovered a "strong community perception that the politicians are out of touch with voters on environmental issues."[lxii]

The London based consultancy, New Economics Foundation, in comparing the environmental performance of 21 OECD countries, found that Australia, Canada and the US were at the bottom of the list, with Australia at number 18, Canada at 20 and the US last at 21. Australians rivaled Americans in terms of garbage production and carbon dioxide emissions per head. Australia also scored badly, with the US, on energy efficiency, species extinctions and private vehicle use.[lxiii] The influence of the industrial lobby in Australia is clearest on the greenhouse issue where the government relies on coal and mining industry funded studies in its decision-making. This led to the situation where the Australian government lobbied (unsuccessfully) to obstruct an international climate agreement in Berlin in 1995, even after the US supported it.[lxiv]

The media can give a distorted impression of public opinion on environmental and other issues. Michael Parenti, in his book *Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media*, argues:

> Public opinion is not just an expression of sentiment; it is a democratic power resource that sometimes constrains and directs policymakers who otherwise spend their time responding to the demands and enticements of

> moneyed interests... The media short-circuit the process by which public preference may otherwise be translated into government policy.[lxv]

The gap between what the majority wants and what government delivers would seem to indicate a failure of democracy. Yet, ironically the corporate eclipse of the green movement described in this book, was only a response to the effective exercise of democratic power by citizen and environmental activists two decades earlier. Although robber barons of a much earlier era like William Vanderbilt could declare "The public be damned!"[lxvi] modern corporate executives cannot afford to take this attitude.

Alex Carey, author of *Taking the Risk out of Democracy* argued that the 20th Century has seen three related developments; "the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy."[lxvii] Similarly Noam Chomsky argued in his book *Necessary Illusions*:

> In the democratic system, the necessary illusions cannot be imposed by force. Rather, they must be instilled in the public mind by more subtle means. A totalitarian state can be satisfied with lesser degrees of allegiance to required truths. It is sufficient that people obey; what they think is of secondary concern. But in a democratic political order, there is always the danger that independent thought might be translated into political action, so it is important to eliminate the threat at its root.[lxviii]

CORPORATE POWER

Corporate power has various dimensions. Traditionally corporate power has been institutionalised in government decision-making structures as a result of the importance of corporate investment to economic growth and the provision of employment. Individual companies can threaten to withdraw that investment if they do not get their way. It is therefore in the interests of government to negotiate and consult extensively with corporate representatives on all policy matters that may affect them. This gives corporations privileged access to government policy making. In many countries, such as Britain and Australia, "policy making occurs not so much in parliament or indeed even in cabinet, but in a more decentralised pattern of *policy communities* involving institutionalised interaction between key departments, relevant statutory authorities, advisory committees and a range of select, client interest groups."[lxix]

Clearly the bargaining power any particular company can exercise will depend on its size, the number of people it employs, its ability to move offshore and the state of the economy in the country where they are exercising that power.[lxx] The more that corporations can cooperate and present a coherent and united political agenda the more power they will have. The degree of corporate influence can fluctuate over time and in the late 1960s and 1970s corporate power was particularly weak. However since that time corporations have consciously built coalitions, set aside individual differences and become more politically active and consequently become more powerful.

Another traditional form of influence has been through financial contributions to parties and candidates. It costs millions of dollars just to run for office in the USA. Most of that money comes from corporations, including 70 per cent of contributions to the Democrat and the Republican parties.[lxxi] In the UK, corporate donations seem to account for over half of all donations to the Conservative Party (£4.3 million out of £7.3 million in 1992-93). But donations don't have to be made public; almost two-thirds of donations received between 198 and 1991 cannot be traced to their donors by outsiders to the party. According to Paul Anderson and Nyta Mann in the New Statesman & Society in 1994:

> The Tories' finances are one of the great unsolved mysteries of British politics… What is known about the Tories is that they have received substantial sums from companies and individuals with commercial interests in government spending and policy decisions. The big corporate donors of the past fifteen years include defence, engineering and construction companies that want to prevent legal constraints on advertising their products and privatized utilities.[lxxii]

In Australia business directly sponsors political party campaigns rather than individual candidates and the major parties, Labor, Liberal and National, receive the majority of their financial support in this way.[lxxiii]

However, politicians are concerned with getting reelected and this means that public opinion matters. Citizens generally do not like the idea that government is run to suit those with economic power and resources. With the rise of public interest groups in the 1960s and 70s the closed policy-making arrangements between industry and government were 'forced open' and governments had to listen to other voices. Environmental groups and others gathered their own information, some of it from government files using Freedom of Information Acts. This information could be effectively used in hearings and in the media[lxxiv] and decision-makers learned to take account of a greater range of interests and to justify their decisions on rational grounds.[lxxv]

This need for 'rational' decisions meant bureaucrats "churned out an endless stream of statistics, reports, hearings, bulletins, journals, rulings, proposals, statements, press reports, and other forms of information" on every issue.[lxxvi] Politicians were now exposed to a far greater range of information from more sources and had to appear to be making informed decisions. So a new market was created: a market for a particular kind of information useful to politicians who needed to justify decisions often still being influenced by financial donations and corporate pressure.[lxxvii]

In response the major corporations opened up public affairs offices. Public relations firms, lobbyists and think tanks proliferated, shaping and moulding information and manufacturing expertise on behalf of their clients and offering it to the politicians. Although caught somewhat off guard at first, in many ways the move towards information-based decisions has suited business interests because of their ability to hire experts—scientists, economists, statisticians—and their fear of losing the 'emotional' battle.

Clearly not all interest groups have equal resources at their disposal and in their efforts to persuade government some groups have more bargaining power. Some groups have more time, resources and energy to devote to influencing government.[lxxviii] As William Greider in his book *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* asks, "Who can afford to show up at all these public hearings? Who will be able to deploy their own lawyers or scientists or economists to testify expertly on behalf of their agenda? Who is going to hire the lobbyists to track the legislative debate at every laborious stage? Most citizens do not qualify."[lxxix] Public-interest groups, such as environmental groups, find it impossible to keep up with all the public hearings and submissions.[lxxx]

Corporations clearly have far greater financial resources at their disposal. As pressure groups they can invest millions of dollars into grassroots organising, polls, lawyers, computer and satellite technology, video news releases, and professional advice to put their case directly to politicians and government officials and to garner public support.

The greater power of corporations in a democratic system has long been recognised. In 1978 an effort to regulate the amount of money corporations spend on propaganda was defeated in the US Supreme Court. A dissenting judge observed:

> Corporations are artificial entities created by law for the purpose of furthering certain economic goals. It has long been recognised, however, that the special status of corporations has placed them in a position to control vast amounts of economic power which may, if not regulated, dominate not only the economy but also the very heart of our democracy, the electoral process.[lxxxi]

Since that time corporations have indeed set out to use their economic power to dominate the machinery of democracy. Greider argues that a new industry has emerged in Washington that he calls "democracy for hire". He says this involves the packaging and sale of democratic expression, and "guarantees the exclusion of most Americans from the debate."[lxxxii] He points out that:

> Only those who have accumulated lots of money are free to play in this version of democracy....Modern methodologies of persuasion have created a new hierarchy of influence over government decisions—a new way in which organized money dominates the action while the unorganized voices of citizens are inhibited from speaking.[lxxxiii]

The traditional pluralist account of competing interest groups gives a veneer of democratic respectability to what is in reality a corporate rout: "the steady diffusion of authority has simply multiplied the opportunities for power to work its will... pluralist deal making continues in the guise of governing—but now the entrenched monied interests are back in charge of the marketplace, running the tables in the grand bazaar."[lxxxiv] Governments, rather than weighing the demands of various interests, are less and less responsive to public opinion and more and more influenced by these corporations and monied interests.

A primary assumption of democracy is that there is no collusion of interests between government and the groups trying to lobby them. However, in practice this is not the

case. For example during the 1980s a close and at times unethical relationship developed in the US between lobbyists and the Reagan administration:

> Members of Congress worked in tandem with lobbyists to generate 'grass-roots' support for pet issues. Lobbyists formed coalitions to support the White House's favorite issues. The White House recruited lobbyists to help with controversial appointees needing Senate confirmation. The Congressional committees or the White House Commissions that were supposed to be looking out for the people's interests, who were to oversee the agencies, who were to clean up the 'messes' when discovered, worked with and were often comprised of lobbyists and publicists. The very organizations designed to protect America from an abusive system had become part of the system.[lxxxv]

Yet despite their huge influence, or perhaps because of it, there is almost no government scrutiny or regulation of lobbying activities.[lxxxvi] John Stauber, editor of *PR Watch*, says: "The corporate flacks, hacks, lobbyists and influence peddlers, the practitioners of modern PR... have become a kind of occupation army in our democracy"[lxxxvii]

The revolving door syndrome further weakens the separation between government and corporate interests. The creation of a senior executive service in the US and in countries like Australia has enabled business people and those whom they have funded in think tanks to penetrate the top layers of government bureaucracy. Each new administration appoints the top levels of the agencies and departments such as State, Defense and Treasury. These appointments often come from the corporate sector, "corporate leaders who sever their numerous directorships to serve in government for two or three years, then return to the corporate community in a same or different capacity."[lxxxviii] In Australia they retain their corporate shareholdings whilst in government unless there is an obvious conflict of interest with their ministerial duties. In any case, it is unlikely that they lose their corporate perspective during their period of office.

Similarly, senior bureaucrats and politicians are often employed by corporations, think tanks, the media and lobbying firms when they lose office or retire from it. In Australia key politicians from the previous Labor Government have moved into organisations such as the Plastics Industry trade association and consultancies which help developers gain government approval for environmentally damaging projects. To have this opportunity, these former government officials need to service corporate interests whilst in office. The same is true of top public servants. Similarly in the US, as has been documented earlier in this book, there is a regular flow of personnel between government administrations and think tanks, the media and public relations firms. Some think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation actively select and train young people with this in mind. Robert Sherrill, in the fifth edition of his well used university text *Why They Call it Politics: A Guide to America's Government*, points out:

> The revolving door between government and industry is oiled by money. Former high-level bureaucrats and politicians leave government to become well-paid lobbyists for big business—often the same big-business elements that they were allegedly regulating when they entered government. (Many

> were alumni of big business at the time they entered government; revolving doors, after all, do go in a circle.)[lxxxix]

The shareholdings of politicians provide another mechanism by which corporate interests are protected. In 1996 there was a major controversy in Australia over the shareholdings of the newly elected Liberal government[xc] and their potential to create conflicts of interest. However, this seems to be accepted practice in the UK where, in 1995, 389 out of 566 MPs had registered financial interests "in outside bodies, directly related to being an MP".[xci] Liberal Democrat MP David Alton noted:

> Prime Ministers soon find solace in directorships and consultancies outside government. On the backbenches the same holds true. One hundred and thirty-five Conservative MPs hold 287 directorships and 146 consultancies between them and the other parties are not immune. Twenty-nine Labour members share sixty directorships and forty-three consultancies; while Liberal Democrats hold a totals of fifteen.[xcii]

The UK adds another dimension to the relationship between business and government by enabling big corporate donors to have their directors knighted; they may subsequently be placed in the House of Lords, where they become part of the legislative system. According to Alton, a donation of more than £500,000 has a 50 percent chance of earning a knighthood for a company director.[xciii]

Close relationships between politicians a and industry executives can affect environmental legislation in other ways. Not only do politicians find their way on to corporate boards during and after their terms in government, but industry executives are also often placed on government committees where they can help make and implement government policy. In 1995 Sir Ron Dearing, director of the corporation IMI, which donated £30,000 to the Tories in 1993, was appointed chairman of the National Curriculum Council; he was recently responsible for a report into higher education in the UK.[xciv]

In 1995 the UK committee which set pollution limits for the cement industry had a membership that included people from the British Cement Association, the British Association of cement Manufacturers, British Pre-Cast Concrete Federation, ARC Southern, Castle Cement, Pioneer Aggregates and the British Ready Mixed Concrete Association.[xcv] Two years later a House of Commons Select Committee, set up following the public concerns about the increased use by cement kilns of industrial waste as a fuel source, found that the control of cement kiln emissions by the Environment Agency had been, according to *New Scientist*, "lax and secretive".[xcvi]

The close relationship between corporations and governments is especially important when it comes to implementation of laws which are made in the public sphere. Once a law is enacted, politicians feel satisfied that they have been seen doing something, the debate over whether the law should be enacted appears to be closed, and the media spotlight tends to be removed. Yet it is then that the real negotiations begin. In Washington, for example, tens of thousands of lawyers, lobbyists, trade associations, consultants and business people then engage in a struggle "over the content of federal regulations—the precise meaning that will flow from the laws that Congress has enacted."[xcvii]

COVERT POWER

The structural power of corporations through their ownership and control of a large part of any modern nation's economy and their power as a highly resourced and powerful pressure group with close ties to government, is supplemented by a third form of power which is far more covert; the power to set the political agenda and shape perceptions.[xcviii] Corporations seek not only to influence legislation and regulation but also to define the agenda—what it is legitimate for government to consider and what can be discussed in the political arena—thereby rendering those groups who have other agendas, ineffective: "everybody is compelled to work within a system of values and institutional rules which restricts the formal political process to making the current system work, even though the system only benefits the few."[xcix] Even the defeats suffered by individual corporations can be seen as "set within a wider political context—an outer framework—which invariably serves the system needs of capitalism."[c]

Setting the agenda means deciding not only what will be discussed but also what won't be. Covert power covers the area of 'non-decisions' as well as decisions.[ci] For example, environmental issues can be debated so long as the system of decision-making that gives autonomy to corporations to decide what they produce and how they produce it is maintained. Decision-making and political debate is therefore confined to the relatively safe areas of waste discharge, packaging, and product safety. So effective is the manufacture of the new corporate consensus that many have accepted the assumption that unless corporations are happy then the economy will suffer and the working and the poor will be worse off. "For the homeless in the streets, then, the highest priority must be to ensure that the dwellers in the mansions are reasonably content."[cii]

Corporations use their economic power and resources to shape public opinion through the think tanks, public relations and propaganda. But this shaping is designed to go unnoticed, "to alter perception, reshape reality and manufacture consent"[ciii] without their targets being even aware that it is happening. Says one PR executive: "You never know when a PR agency is being effective; you'll just find your views slowly shifting."[civ]

Corporations also use institutions such as the media to shape cultural understandings, meanings and values and "if not usurping the whole of ideological space, still significantly limiting what is thought throughout the society."[cv] True democracy would require easy access for all points of view to be communicated with mass audiences on topics of debate. However the media portrays a very restricted range of views. 'Photo opportunities' and spectacles replace lively political debate.[cvi]

Education is another obvious arena to shape public perceptions and cultural expectations. Corporations have quite consciously set about ensuring that future generations are big consumers, share corporate values and view environmental problems from a corporate point of view, through pervasive advertising on television and in schools and through specially designed educational materials distributed to schools. Advertising and the television programming it encourages also reinforce the

idea that personal, social and environmental problems can be solved through purchasing corporate products and services.

Democracy has become dominated by a vast information industry aimed at attaining the consent of the public to the goals and values of those who can best afford the experts.

> The ascendancy of the PR industry and the collapse of American participatory democracy are the same phenomenon. The growing concentration of economic power in fewer and fewer hands, combined with sophisticated marketing techniques and radical new electronic technologies, have come together in the past decade to fundamentally re-shape our social and political landscape....[cvii]

The aim is not to eliminate debate or prevent controversy because controversy, reinforces the perception of a healthy democracy. What is important is the power to limit the subject, scope and boundaries of the controversy.[cviii]

This results in and is reinforced by minimal differences between major political parties. In the US, Britain and Australia where the major political parties are now mainly funded by corporations and most of their policy development originates in conservative think tanks, there has been a merging of agendas and a decline in difference between parties.[cix] The sameness of the parties, the emptiness of the campaign rituals and commercials, and the feeling that their vote doesn't count for much, has contributed to massive voter apathy in the US where voting is voluntary.

At a time of rising citizen participation in environmental and public interest groups, less than half of the people even bother to vote. At the regional and local level a candidate usually only needs 20-30% of the eligible electorate voting for them to get elected.[cx] At the 1994 Congressional elections when the Republicans gained a majority, only a third of those eligible to vote did so.[cxi] Even amongst those who vote, apathy is high. One survey found that only 10 per cent of those who voted thought their vote made a difference and only 17 per cent though the election was important.[cxii]

In the UK, participation in general elections tends to be higher – generally, between 70 and 80 percent. However *Freedom's Children*, a 1995 study by Helen Wilkinson and Geoff Mulgan of UK voters between 18 and 35 years old, found that young people are increasingly alienated from party politics. They are less likely to register to vote than older people, "less likely to vote for or join a political party and less likely to be politically active":

> The overwhelming story emerging from our research, both quantitative and qualitative, is of an historic political disconnection. In effect, an entire generation has opted out of party politics.[cxiii]

Whilst they are concerned about particular issues, including the environment, they do not see that voting for a particular party will do much to address them.

THE MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

The media's bland diet of uncontroversial material does not encourage participation in the political process but depoliticises the audience.[cxiv] Political Scientist Lance Bennett argues that the "parade of disjointed spectacles" that fill news programmes "relegate citizens to spectator roles, leaving a residue of powerlessness after the drama and entertainment of the moment have faded."[cxv] This is done by avoiding larger questions of power and institutional reform, by focusing on individual actors, appealing to the "concerns of individual viewers" and severing the connection between political information (as received from the media) and political organisation and participation.[cxvi] The media present politics "as a depressing spectacle rather than as a vital activity in which citizens can and should be engaged."[cxvii]

Television, in particular, tends to depoliticise its viewers by filling their time with mindless passive entertainment which portrays the existing system of free enterprise and consumption as generally beneficial and gives only limited air play to protest groups, and usually the more moderate of these.[cxviii] The television entertainment format tends to shorten viewers attention spans so that they have less patience for listening to ideas that take a while to explain.[cxix]

Joe Saltzman, an editor of *USA Today*, argues that the media practice of replacing complex information with symbols, images and catchwords, has trained the audience to want nothing else and that this threatens democracy:

> Citizens become conditioned to respond to the facile stereotype, to the symbols they trust or fear, and they become incapable of understanding and acting on real debate and questioning. They even grow to resent such discussion, wanting instead a quick fix, a fast image, an easy-to-grasp phrase.[cxx]

"The overwhelming conclusion is that the media generally operate in ways that promote apathy, cynicism, and quiescence, rather than active citizenship and participation."[cxxi] Writing about the British media in his book *Packaging Politics*, Bob Franklin notes that most citizens glean their political knowledge from the media but at the same time the media packaging of politics has emphasised "image and appearance" and the reduction of political discourse to sound bites. Audiences have therefore grown "increasingly sceptical, uninterested and cynical about media presentations of politics." This has resulted in "an increasingly widespread lack of interest in politics."[cxxii]

> In media democracy, politics (like football) has become an armchair activity. Watching the match from a ringside seat at home has replaced the need to play the game. Participation in a media democracy is essentially ersatz and vicarious.[cxxiii]

Similarly Jacobson and Mazur, from the Centre for the Study of Commercialism, argue that television undermines democracy:

> Democracy demands an informed citizenry; TV reduces information to oversimplified factoids. Democracy demands involvement; television keeps us glued to the couch. Democracy depends on the freedom of the press; television is controlled by a handful of private interests. Democracy thrives

> in strong communities; television keeps us isolated in our separate living rooms.[cxxiv]

At the same time that the media is turning the public away from politics, politicians are increasingly using the media, rather than the public, "as a source of issues and as a source of support."[cxxv] The media has become the most significant audience for politicians.[cxxvi] Noam Chomsky divides the media into the mass popular media and the 'elite' media. The latter, for example the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, is aimed at decision-makers—the "more educated, wealthy, articulate part of the population."[cxxvii] Of the mass popular media, Chomsky says:

> For the large mass of the population, I suspect that the main impact of television comes not through the news but through mechanisms to divert their attention. That means network programming — everything from sports to sitcoms to fanciful pictures of the way life is 'supposed' to be. Anything that has the effect of isolating people — keeping them separated from one another and focused on the tube —will make people passive observers.... The role of the public, then, is to be spectators, not participants; their role is just to watch and occasionally to ratify.[cxxviii]

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTALISM

Nevertheless the media plays a part in creating mass movements through its ability to present images of protest and alternative lifestyles to masses of people. No matter how negatively it portrays such groups and their leaders, it cannot prevent people from being attracted to the values and lifestyles of those being portrayed. In the 1960s television "might have inadvertently advanced countercultural and radical values."[cxxix]

The periodic emergence of countercultural movements and strong public activism is a sign that even the underlying realm of cultural understandings and meanings is fluid and changeable. This fluidity and changeability means that the opportunity to break free from corporate definitions of what is possible and feasible is always there. John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton in their book *Toxic Sludge is Good For You! Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry* put their faith for the future in the emergence of a new genuine democratic movement. They say that the existence of such a vast public relations industry "proves it *is* possible. The fact that corporations and governments feel compelled to spend billions of dollars every year manipulating the public is a perverse tribute to human nature and our own moral values."[cxxx]

But to influence the covert realm of cultural constructions and ideology requires going beyond the superficial jockeying for influence that occurs in the realm of policy debate. Environmentalists, particularly the major environmental groups, tend to concentrate their efforts in the public realm of pressure groups politics and ignore the ideological sphere where corporations set the agenda. It is in this ideological sphere that environmentalists need to devote their energies if they want to win.

Jim Hightower argues in *Earth Island Journal* that environmentalists are not doing much good as lobbyists in Washington where the boundaries of the debate and its rules of etiquette are already clearly drawn:

> We've simply go to get the hogs out of the creek. As Aunt Eula knew, this is not a chore to undertake in your best trousers, politely pleading: 'Here hog, here hog... pretty please.' To get hogs out of the creek, you have to put your shoulders to them—and shove.
> Yet most national environmental organisations today are indeed dressed in their Sunday trousers, engaged in the soft-hands work of lawyers and lobbyists in Washington, sincerely but futily attempting to negotiate the relative positions of hogs...[cxxxi]

A new wave of environmentalism is now called for. One that will engage in the task of exposing corporate myths and methods of manipulation. One that opens up new areas and ideas to public debate rather than following an old agenda set by corporations.

---

[i] David Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes: The Political Power of Business in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), p. 65.
[ii] Michael Parenti, *Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), p. 67.
[iii] Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes*, pp. 70, 98.
[iv] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[v] *Ibid.* p. 112.
[vi] Edward A. Grefe and Marty Linsky, *The New Corporate Activism: Harnessing the Power of Grassroots Tactics for Your Organization* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), p. 2.
[vii] Quoted in Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes*, p. 194.
[viii] *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
[ix] Grefe and Linski, *The New Corporate Activism*, p. 3.
[x] Jeff Blyskal and Marie Blyskal, *PR: How the Public Relations Industry Writes the News* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1985), p. 153.
[xi] John S. Saloma, *Ominous Politics: The New Conservative Labyrinth* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), p. 67; Vogel, *op.cit.*, pp. 195-7.
[xii] Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes*, p. 197.
[xiii] *Ibid.*, p. 198.
[xiv] *Ibid.*, p. 200.
[xv] Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990), p. 132; David Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics: The New Washington and the Rise of Think Tanks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 156; Robert Sherrill, *Why They Call it Politics: A Guide to America's Government*, 5th ed (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), p. 374.
[xvi] Stephen Bell and John Warhurst, 'Political Activism Among Large Firms', in Stephen Bell and John Wanna (eds), *Business-Government Relations in Australia* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), pp. 58-9; John Wanna, 'Furthering Business Interests: Business Associations and Political Representation', in Stephen Bell and John Wanna (eds), *Business-Government Relations in Australia* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), p. 73.
[xvii] Wanna, 'Furthering Business Interests', p. 74.
[xviii] Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes*, p. 204.
[xix] Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 49.
[xx] Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes*, p. 217.
[xxi] Parenti, *Inventing Reality*, p. 73; S. Prakash Sethi, *Advocacy Advertising and Large Corporations* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1977), p. 61.
[xxii] Alex Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, ed. Andrew Lohrey (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1995)pp. 87-88, 105, 112, 114.
[xxiii] Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes*, p. 221.
[xxiv] Himmelstein, *To The Right*, pp. 146, 149-50.
[xxv] Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes*, p. 223; Saloma, *Ominous Politics*, p. 74; Himmelstein, *To The Right*, p. 140.
[xxvi] Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, pp. 112-3.

[xxvii] *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 116-7.
[xxviii] *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 119, 125.
[xxix] Eric Alterman, 'Fighting Smart', *Mother Jones*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1994), p. 59.
[xxx] Himmelstein, *To The Right*, pp. 129, 146.
[xxxi] Parenti, *Inventing Reality*, pp. 91, 93.
[xxxii] Robert M. Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 86.
[xxxiii] Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes*, p. 193.
[xxxiv] Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, p. 89; Parenti, *Inventing Reality*, p. 74.
[xxxv] Sale, *The Green Revolution*, pp. 49-51; Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics*, p. 43.
[xxxvi] Andrew Rowell, *Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environment Movement* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 22; John Winward, 'Consumer Preferences and the Environment', in Terry Barker (eds), *Green Futures for Economic Growth: Britain in 2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge Econometrics, 1991), p. 107; G.Bruce Doern and Thomas Conway, *The Greening of Canada: Federal Institutions and Decisions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 118; Peter Peter Perkins, 'Developing a Program to Satisfy the Community's Concerns' Paper presented at the NSW Agriculture & Fisheries DAs Conference 1990., p. 34.
[xxxvii] Philip McIntosh, 'Most prepared to put environment ahead of growth', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1990.
[xxxviii] Micheal O'Keefe and Kevin Daley, 'Checking the right', *Buzzworm*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1993).
[xxxix] E. Bruce. Harrison, *Going Green: How to Communicate Your Company's Environmental Commitment* (Homewood, IL: Business One Irwin, 199?), p. 6.
[xl] Quoted in Rowell, *Green Backlash*, p. 71.
[xli] Kate O'Callaghan, 'Whose Agenda For America?', *Audubon* (September/October 1992), p. 86.
[xlii] Quoted in William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 24.
[xliii] C. J. Silas, 'The Environment: Playing to Win', *Public Relations Journal* (January 1990), p. 34.
[xliv] Quoted in Joyce Nelson, 'Great Global Greenwash: Burson-Marsteller, Pax Trilateral, and the Brundtland Gang vs. the Environment', *CovertAction*, No. 44 (1993), p. 27.
[xlv] Susan Fry Bovet, 'Leading companies turn to trade associations for lobbying', *Public Relations Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 7 (1994).
[xlvi] Grefe, *Inventing Reality*, p. 244.
[xlvii] Louise Levathes, 'Easy Money: How Congressional Candidates are Cleaning up with the Dirty Water PACs', *Audubon* (November/December 1995), p. 18.
[xlviii] *Ibid.*, p. 19; Mark Megalli and Andy Friedman, *Masks of Deception: Corporate Front Groups in America*: (Essential Information, 1991), p. 184.
[xlix] James N. Gardner, 'Lobbying, European-Style', *Europe*, Vol. 311 (November 1991).
[l] Rowell, *Green Backlash*, p. 22.
[li] Ibid., p. 320.
[lii] Chakravarthi Raghavan, 'TNCs control two-thirds of the world economy', *Third World Resurgence*, No. 65/66 (1995), p. 31.
[liii] Anon., 'Going Global', *New Internationalist* (August 1993), p. 18.
[liv] Riley E. Dunlap, George H. Gallup Jr and Alec M. Gallup, 'Of Global Concern: Results of the Health of the Planet Survey', *Environment*, Vol. 35, No. 9 (1993)
[lv] George Pettinico, 'The Public Opinion Paradox', *Sierra* (November/December 1995), p. 28.
[lvi] *Ibid.*
[lvii] *Ibid.*
[lviii] *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 30; David B. Rockland and Gwyn L. Fletcher, 'The economy, the environment, and public opinion', *EPA Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 3-4 (1994).
[lix] Anon., 'Environmental Policy: Could Try Harder', *The Economist*, Vol. 337 (21 October 1995)
[lx] Louise Levathes, 'Easy Money: How Congressional Candidates are Cleaning up with the Dirty Water PACs', *Audubon* (November/December 1995), p. 16.
[lxi] Bob Beale, 'Most say environment more important than economy', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 April 1994; Kate Southam, 'Why Green Australia got such a black mark', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 February 1994, p. 28.
[lxii] Bob Beale, 'We're All Going Green', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 1994, p. 7A.
[lxiii] Kate Southam, 'Why Green Australia got such a black mark', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 February 1994, p. 28.

[lxiv] Gavin Gilchrist, 'Secret Strategy Undermines Greenhouse Fight', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1995

[lxv] Michael Parenti, *Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), p. 93.

[lxvi] Fraser P. Seitel, *The Practice of Public Relations*, 6th ed (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), p. 32.

[lxvii] Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, p. 18.

[lxviii] Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 48.

[lxix] John Wanna, 'Furthering Business Interests: Business Associations and Political Representation', in Stephen Bell and John Wanna (eds), *Business-Government Relations in Australia* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), p. 105.

[lxx] Stephen Bell, 'The Political Power of Business', in Stephen Bell and John Wanna (eds), *Business-Government Relations in Australia* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), p. 51.

[lxxi] Andre Carothers, 'The Green Machine', *New Internationalist* (August 1993), p. 15.

[lxxii] Paul Anderson and Nyta Mann, 'A cure for sleaze?', *New Statesman & Society*, Vol. 7, No. 327 (1994), pp. 14-16.

[lxxiii] John Wanna, 'Furthering Business Interests, p. 71.

[lxxiv] David Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics: The New Washington and the Rise of Think Tanks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 152-3.

[lxxv] *Ibid*., p. 8; Winand Gellner, 'The Politics of Policy "Political Think Tanks" and their Markets in the U.S.-Institutional Environment', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1995), p. 501; Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*, p. 47.

[lxxvi] Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics*, p. 41.

[lxxvii] Greider, *Who Will Tell the People,* p. 47.

[lxxviii] David Johnson, 'The Canadian Regulatory System and Corporatism: Empirical Findings and Analytical Implications', *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1993), pp. 98-99; Peter Williamson, *Corporatism in Perspective: An Introductory Guide to Corporatist Theory*, ed. Philippe Schmitter and Alan Cawson, *Sage Studies in Neo-Corporatism* (London: Sage Publications, 1989), pp. 2, 54-7.

[lxxix] Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*, p. 50.

[lxxx] *Ibid*., p. 50.

[lxxxi] Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, p. 105.

[lxxxii] William Greider, 'Grassroots organizing, PR-style: Democracy for Hire', *PR Watch*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1993), pp. 8-9; Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*

[lxxxiii] Greider, *Who Will Tell the People,* p. 35-36.

[lxxxiv] *Ibid*., pp. 108-9.

[lxxxv] Susanne A. Roschwalb, 'The Hill & Knowlton Cases: A brief on the controversy', *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1994), p. 270.

[lxxxvi] Johan Carlisle, 'Public Relationships: Hill and Knowlton, Robert Gray, and the CIA', *CovertAction*, No. 44 (1993), p. 25.

[lxxxvii] quoted in Peter Montague, 'PR firms for hire to undermine democracy', *Rachel's Hazardous Waste News*, No. 361 (1993)

[lxxxviii] G. William Domhoff, 'The Power Elite and Government', in George McKenna and Stanley Feingold (eds), *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Political Issues* (Guildford, Connecticut: Dushkin Publishing Group, 1985), p. 21.

[lxxxix] Robert Sherrill, *Why They Call it Politics: A Guide to America's Government*, 5th ed (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), p. 363.

[xc] M. Gordon and G. Megalogonis, 'PM forced to review code', *The Australian*, 16 October 1996.

[xci] Rowell, *Green Backlash*, p. 78.

[xcii] *Ibid*., p. 78.

[xciii] *Ibid*., p. 80.

[xciv] Anderson and Mann, 'A cure for sleaze?', pp. 14-16.

[xcv] Anon, 'Cement Mixers', Campaigns and Updates, *The Ecologist*, Nov/Dec 1995, p. 2.

[xcvi] Anon, 'Soft on Cement', *New Scientist*, 15 March 1997, p. 11..

[xcvii] Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*, p. 107.

[xcviii] Bell, 'The Political Power of Business', p. 47.

[xcix] Peter Williamson, *Corporatism in Perspective: An Introductory Guide to Corporatist Theory*, ed. Philippe Schmitter and Alan Cawson, *Sage Studies in Neo-Corporatism* (London: Sage Publications, 1989), p. 57.
[c] Bell, 'The Political Power of Business', p. 56.
[ci] Alan R. Ball and Frances Millard, *Pressure Groups and the Distribution of Power: A Comparative Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 24.
[cii] Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 22.
[ciii] Mark Dowie, 'Introduction: Torches of Liberty', in John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton (eds), *Toxic Sludge is Good For You! Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1995), p. 2.
[civ] John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, *Toxic Sludge is Good For You! Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1995), p. 14.
[cv] Tom Gitlin quoted in Charlotte Ryan, *Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1991), p. 18.
[cvi] Douglas Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p. 94.
[cvii] Stauber quoted in (Montague 1993)
[cviii] Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 48.
[cix] Robert Sherrill, *Why They Call it Politics: A Guide to America's Government*, 5th ed (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), p. 351.
[cx] *Ibid.*, p. 359; Stauber and Rampton, *Toxic Sludge is Good For You!* p. 78..
[cxi] Brian Tokar, 'The "Wise Use" Backlash: Responding to Militant Anti-Environmentalism', *The Ecologist*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1995), p. 155.
[cxii] Sherrill, *Why They Call it Politics*, p. 360.
[cxiii] Trevor Smith, 'Citizenship, Community and Constitutionalism', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (1996), pp. 262-272.
[cxiv] Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy,* p. 104.
[cxv] W. Lance Bennett, 'White Noise: The Perils of Mass Mediated Democracy', *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 59, No. December (1992), p. 402.
[cxvi] *Ibid.*, p. 404.
[cxvii] Fallows quoted in Jay Rosen, 'Breaking the News: How the media undermine American democracy', *The Nation*, Vol. 262 (5 February 1996)
[cxviii] Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy*, p. 105.
[cxix] Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics*, p. 88.
[cxx] Joe Saltzman, 'Style vs. Substance', *USA Today* (January 1989), p. 87.
[cxxi] William A. Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes and Theodore Sasson, 'Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality', *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 18 (1992), p. 373.
[cxxii] Bob Franklin, *Packaging Politics: Political Communications in Britain's Media Democracy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p. 11.
[cxxiii] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[cxxiv] Michael F. Jacobson and Laurie Ann Mazur, *Marketing Madness* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 47-8.
[cxxv] Charlotte Ryan, *Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1991), p. 7.
[cxxvi] *Ibid.*, p. 130.
[cxxvii] Noam Chomsky quoted in Rick Szykowny, 'Manipulating People: The Role of the Media is Serving Power', *Third World Resurgence*, Vol. 12, No. August (1991), p. 28.
[cxxviii] Ibid., p. 30.
[cxxix] Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy*, p. 119.
[cxxx] Stauber and Rampton, *Toxic Sludge is Good For You!* p. 206.
[cxxxi] Jim Hightower, 'Get the hogs out of the creek!', *Earth Island Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1995), p. 32.